DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 311 UD 034 464

AUTHOR	Gillborn, David; Mirza, Heidi Safia
TITLE	Educational Inequality: Mapping Race, Class and Gender. A Synthesis of Research Evidence.
INSTITUTION	Office for Standards in Education, London (England).
PUB DATE	2000-11-00
NOTE	33p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Achievement; Academic Standards; Black Students; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; *Ethnic Bias; Foreign Countries; Gender Issues; Indians; *Racial Bias; *Sex Bias; Sex Differences; Social Bias; *Social Class
IDENTIFIERS	Bangladeshis; Caribbean Islanders; Pakistanis; United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This document synthesizes research on educational inequality in the United Kingdom, examining the significance of race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. It analyzes data from the Department of Education and Employment and from the ongoing Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales. It emphasizes the principal minority groups in the area (Black Caribbean, Black African, Black other, Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi). It discusses: "Including Everyone in Educational Success" (raising standards of attainment and inclusion); "Mapping Attainment at the Local Level" (measuring attainment, local variability, and variability and inequality); "Raising Standards for All?" (raising standards, unequal shares, and mapping attainment from baseline to standardized testing); "Social Class and Educational Attainment" (measuring social class and class, race, and attainment inequalities); and "The 'Gender Gap'" (gender differences, race and gender, and race, class, and gender). Overall, there are distinct patterns of inequality. Inequality of attainment on standardized tests puts African-Caribbean, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi students at a disadvantage in the youth education, labor, and training markets. Social class and gender differences are associated with differences in attainment, but they cannot account for persistent underlying ethnic inequalities. In some cases, ethnic inequalities have increased in recent years. (Contains 76 references.) (SM)

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EDUCATIONAL inequality

MAPPING RACE, CLASS AND GENDER
A synthesis of research evidence

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November 2000

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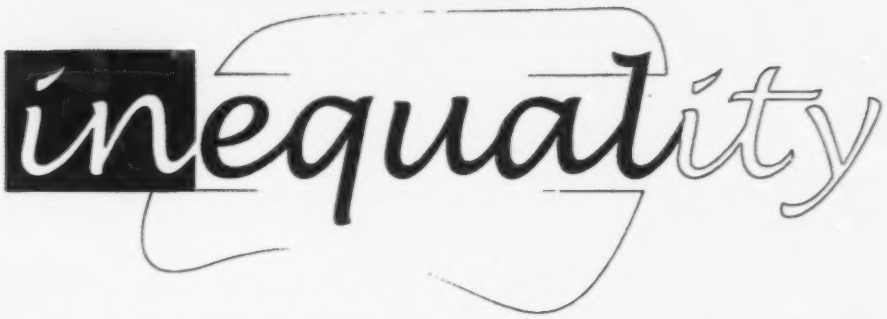

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing this review we have benefited from the help and advice of many colleagues. We would like especially to thank Christine Agambar HMI, Chris Power HMI, David Read and Silvaine Wiles HMI at OFSTED; Judy Sebba and Trevor Knight at the DfEE; Sophie Kemp, Cate Knowles, Peter Mortimore, Tami Ryan and Geoff Whitty at the Institute of Education, University of London; and finally, thanks to Chris Vieler-Porter, Jennifer James and all the LEA officers who granted access to EMAG submissions and, in many cases, gave of their time to answer our queries and requests for further information.

INTRODUCTION

> **'The [Macpherson] report does not place a responsibility on someone else; it places a responsibility on each of us. We must make racial equality a reality. The vision is clear: we must create a society in which every individual, regardless of colour, creed or race, has the same opportunities and respect as his or her neighbour.'**
>
> Jack Straw (The Home Secretary) speaking on the publication of *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, February 1999.[1]

The findings of *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*[2] generated widespread public commitment to the goal of racial equality. Developing an educational agenda with regard to racial equality is clearly a priority.[3] However the educational recommendations of the Lawrence Inquiry have been met by concern about institutional racism on one hand,[4] and confusion as to the way forward on the other. *Raising the attainment of minority ethnic pupils – school and LEA responses*, published by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), shortly after the Lawrence Inquiry, suggested that most Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools lacked clarity and direction when it came to addressing inequalities of attainment between different ethnic groups. The report observed that:

> 'Although most schools have equal opportunities policies, few have clear procedures for monitoring their implementation and their impact on practice is limited.'
>
> 'Fewer than a quarter of the 25 LEAs visited have a clear strategy for raising the attainment of minority ethnic groups.'[5]

It is within this context that the current document was commissioned. Drawing on new evidence, much of it never previously published, this report seeks to place ethnic inequalities within a wider discussion of educational inequality. The aim is to establish, on the basis of the best available evidence, the relative significance of 'race' and ethnicity alongside other factors, especially gender and social class background, so as to clarify an agenda for racial equality in education.

> **This document focuses on new evidence that examines how different groups share in the rising levels of attainment at the end of compulsory schooling.**

We draw on the best available evidence in the field, including analyses of official data supplied by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) such as LEA submissions to the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG)[6] and material based on the ongoing Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales (YCS). It is hoped that by clarifying the facts in this particular area this review will contribute to progressing the debate forward.

---

1 *Hansard*, 24 February 1999, column 393.

2 Macpherson (1999).

3 *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (sometimes referred to as the *Macpherson Report*) made 70 recommendations overall, four with specific reference to education:
67: recommended amendment of the National Curriculum to value diversity, prevent racism and 'better reflect the needs of a diverse society';
68: spoke of the duty of LEAs and school Governors to develop strategies to prevent and address racism in schools;
69: required OFSTED inspections to examine the implementation of these strategies.
70: called for community and local initiatives to promote cultural diversity and address racism.
These recommendations were broadly accepted in the Home Secretary's action plan, published in response to the Inquiry (Home Office, 1999).

4 *For a discussion of these developments and quotations from various commentators see Blair et al* (1999).

5 OFSTED (1999, pp. 7-8).

6 After these data were gathered the scheme was renamed the Ethnic Minority and Travellers' Achievement Grant (EMTAG).

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The terms of the debate

As with the previous OFSTED review in this area, our focus is on the principal minority ethnic groups as defined in the last census: Black Caribbean, Black African, Black other, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Together, these groups account for around 80 per cent of Britain's minority ethnic population.[7] Children from Gypsy and Traveller communities are not included here because, at the time of commissioning, a separate project was out for tender on this group.[8] Chinese children are also not included. This is because the number of Chinese pupils in any one locality is generally low and so prone to rapid fluctuations in attainment statistics, where such data are presented as percentages based on small populations.[9] Additionally, new research suggests that Chinese pupils are the most likely to attend independent schools: since this review is concerned with attainment and provision in the state sector this adds a further reason for treating with caution any simple comparisons with Chinese pupils as a group.[10]

The ethnic group names that are used in this report are those most commonly adopted in official statistics and relevant academic research.[11] There is also a recognition of terms that would be acknowledged and supported by the people so labelled. Consequently, the term 'African-Caribbean' is used as a general signifier for people of Black African and/or Black Caribbean heritage. This term is also used where statistics sum together the various Black groups identified in official data.

Equality of opportunity

Equality of opportunity is a vital issue of social and economic importance to the whole of society. Traditionally, racial equality has been perceived as a specialist area of only marginal significance in comparison with issues such as social class and gender which, it is sometimes argued, affect everyone. This view, which assumes that minority ethnic performance is only of relevance to the minorities themselves, is out of date in the context of the wider economic and social trends towards global diversity and the necessity for a sustainable multiculturalism. If any individual is denied the opportunity to fulfil their potential because of their racial, ethnic, class or gendered status it is now widely understood that society as a whole bears a social and economic cost by being deprived the fruits of their enterprise, energy and imagination.

> Equality of opportunity is a vital issue of social and economic importance to the whole of society.

There are few parts of the education world that are not directly affected by the multiethnic nature of our society. Statistics from the DfEE, for example, suggest that only a minority of primary schools, and virtually no secondary schools, can accurately claim to be 'all white'.[12] It is inconceivable that any pupil currently in school could live their life without meeting, working with, or in some other way affecting, and being affected by, people from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds.

> Few schools can genuinely describe themselves as 'all white'.

7 Derived from table 1.2 in Office for National Statistics (1996).
8 *Education Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children*, ref. 4RP/200/98. DfEE.
9 *For a discussion of the demographic issues concerned, see Taylor* (1987).
10 Demack *et al* (2000) found that Chinese pupils were the most likely of all ethnic groups to attend independent schools: more than twice as likely to attend as their white peers, more than four times as likely as Black pupils, and eight times the rate of Bangladeshi and Pakistani children.
11 There is no universally accepted system of terminology for the social distinctions commonly associated with 'racial' and ethnic meaning. *For a discussion of some of the problems see Mason* (2000) *and Richardson & Wood* (1999).
12 'One-quarter of all primary schools have no ethnic minority pupils – but only five per cent of all secondary schools have no such pupils' (DfEE 1999a, p. 2).

INCLUDING EVERYONE IN EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Raising standards of attainment and inclusion

The White Paper *Excellence in Schools* set the tone for the main thrust of education reforms through the late 1990s and into the twenty-first century. In his foreword the Secretary of State for Education and Employment described 'the Government's core commitment' as 'equality of opportunity and high standards for all'.[13] The document recognised that inequality of educational attainment is a key factor placing young people at risk of isolation, non-participation and social exclusion later in life.[14]

> **Closing the gaps in educational attainment between social groups has been widely acknowledged as a pressing concern of national importance.**

The term 'underachievement' is often used to describe these differences in attainment. Unfortunately, there has been confusion about the meaning of the term.[15] It is often assumed, for example, that the reason for 'underachievement' must lie with the pupils and/or their families rather than the education system itself.[16] It has also been argued that the notion of 'underachievement' undermines ethnic minority efforts to succeed and desire to do well, masking their true achievements and alternative educational practice.[17] As several writers have emphasized, the notion of 'underachievement' has too often become a stereotype. What began life as a useful concept, meant to identify an inequality of opportunity, has sometimes slipped into a pervasive 'discourse of despair' among and about ethnic minorities.[18]

Differences in average achievement between social groups raise cause for concern but do not, in themselves, *prove* anything about the potential of those groups. The reasons for such relative 'underachievement' are multiple and patterns of inequality are not fixed. For example, here and in the previous OFSTED review of the field,[19] evidence shows that any one group, say African-Caribbeans, may be ranked poorly in national measures of achievement (such as the proportion attaining five higher grades (A*-Cs) in their GCSE examinations), but the same group can be doing relatively well in some schools and in some LEAs.

> **Emphasising *difference* in attainment between groups can be part of a necessary analysis of inequalities in educational outcomes. However, care should be taken that such an approach does not lead to a hierarchy of ethnic minorities based on assumptions of inherent ability.[20]**

13 Foreword by the Secretary of State (DfEE 1997, p. 3).
14 *See, for example, the report 'Bridging the Gap' by the Social Exclusion Unit* (1999).
15 The notion of 'underachievement' has played a particularly significant role in the development of debates around ethnic diversity in British education, especially through the work of the Rampton/Swann Committee in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The label 'underachievement' has been widely used to refer to the differential educational outcomes among racial and ethnic minorities, but the term has a long and contested history. *See, for example, Halsey et al* (1980), *Gillborn* (1990) *and Foster et al* (1996).
16 *For a critique of underachievement see Mirza* (1992), *chapter 2 and Wright* (1987, p. 126).
17 Mirza (1997); Reay and Mirza (1997).
18 *For critiques see Gillborn & Gipps* (1996), *Mirza* (1992), *Troyna* (1984) *and Wright* (1997).
19 Gillborn and Gipps (1996).
20 It is vital to identify differences in attainment but we must be careful to avoid seeming to support wider beliefs that portray either 'model'- or 'deficient' ethnic minorities. Such notions reinforce wholly inaccurate stereotypical perceptions that some ethnic groups are 'naturally' talented in certain areas of the curriculum or inherently culturally disposed to learning, while others are not (Mirza 1999). Thus, simply replacing 'underachievement' with the more recent notion of 'difference' needs to be carefully considered.

MAPPING ATTAINMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Measuring attainment

The previous OFSTED review of research in this field included data from a range of LEAs who provided details of minority attainment in their areas. Many readers commented on the usefulness of this material; it demonstrated the amount of variation between different parts of the country and provided sound evidence to counter universal assumptions based on limited information or isolated surveys. For example, Bangladeshi pupils did not attain highly in most surveys, but in one LEA they emerged as the highest attaining group of all.[21] We wanted to develop this aspect of our understanding and so, in preparing this review, we sought to make use of the wealth of statistical data generated by LEAs as part of their submission for support under the newly created Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG).[22] All LEAs that submitted bids under the first round of EMAG funding, in 1999, were asked for permission to use data they had sent to the DfEE. Only two LEAs did not grant us permission, meaning that we are able to draw on 118 submissions.[23] This represents the most comprehensive database yet assembled of variations in minority attainment at the local level.

LEA submissions for the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) offer a unique glimpse of variation between localities.

However, the data are not without their limitations. First, a condition of access was that we maintain the anonymity of each LEA. This means that there are certain details, which might otherwise have been helpful to readers, that we cannot disclose when describing particular authorities. Second, many LEAs had never before gathered ethnically-based statistics on such a scale. Consequently, some data were put together hurriedly and, on occasion, LEAs left sections of the form blank. Finally, a majority of submissions did not stipulate the raw numbers behind some of the percentages that they quoted. This means, for example, that when an LEA says that a certain percentage *of a minority group attained at least five higher grade passes in their GCSE examinations, the* number *of pupils involved might be counted in tens or hundreds.*

In our analysis of the EMAG data we restrict ourselves to working with the percentages as presented in the LEAs' submissions. Throughout, readers should remind themselves that, because of the uneven demographic distribution of minority ethnic populations, in some cases the percentages will refer to very small groups locally. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the case that never before has data on ethnic minority attainment been available for so many different LEAs.

All 118 submissions were analysed in relation to the proportion of pupils listed as attaining at least five higher grade GCSEs.[24] No single ethnic classification was followed in the submissions: some LEAs presented data for a wide range of different ethnic groups; others limited themselves to the officially designated categories; a few chose to collapse these groups still further into a smaller set of categories. Where sufficient data were presented we compared pupils in the following categories: White, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean, Black African and Black other. Several LEAs combined all Black groups under a single heading.

One of the first points to strike us was the number of LEAs that, while applying for funding that is explicitly targeted on the needs of minority ethnic pupils, could not give a figure for minority attainment in year 11. Almost a third of the LEAs biding for EMAG funds did not record current GCSE attainments by ethnic origin: 37 LEAs of 118 (31 per cent).

21 Gillborn & Gipps (1996, pp. 25-6).
22 EMAG replaced the special funding previously available under section 11 of the Local Government Act (1966).
23 The two LEAs that withheld permission do not cater for significant minority populations.
24 This was the most commonly available statistic for attainment at the end of compulsory schooling. LEAs were asked also to supply details of pupils attaining at least 1 grade A*-G and an average point score per pupil: unfortunately, these measures were completed less often.

The EMAG submissions show that ethnic monitoring is still not a universal feature of LEA data gathering.

Almost one-third of the authorities, which identify themselves as in need of additional support for minority needs, did not supply GCSE attainment data in 1999.

Local variability

The EMAG data relate to attainments in the summer of 1998 and paint a picture of considerable variability.

White pupils are the highest achieving group in four LEAs (five per cent of the 81 LEAs that monitor for ethnicity). In a further 26 LEAs (32 per cent of those monitoring) white pupils are the second highest attaining of the groups in question. At the other end of the spectrum, there are six authorities (seven per cent of LEAs monitoring) where white pupils are the lowest attaining of all.[25]

In just over one in three authorities (that monitor for ethnicity) white pupils are among the two highest attaining groups.

This figure almost certainly underestimates the true level of white attainment because those authorities that do not monitor by ethnicity, and those that did not bid for EMAG support at all, are likely to be among those with the least history of minority settlement. Consequently, the LEAs that do not appear in the figures are, on balance, likely to also be places where white pupils enjoy relatively high attainments.

The most interesting fact to emerge from the EMAG data is that for each of the main ethnic groups we studied there is at least one LEA where *that* group is the highest attaining. Potentially this is very encouraging news, although it must be remembered that this is a measure of their attainment *relative* to other groups. It suggests that even for the groups with the most serious inequalities of attainment nationally, there are places where that trend is being bucked. This view must be tempered by an awareness of the small numbers involved in some areas.[26] Nevertheless, the significance of this finding should not be overlooked and is a reminder of the variability of attainment and the lack of any necessary or pre-determined ethnic ordering.

All can achieve: of the six minority ethnic categories we analysed, every one is the highest attaining of all in at least one LEA.

The relative attainment of ***African-Caribbean pupils*** is not easily summarised because several authorities use composite categories: some record *three* Black groups, some *two*, some *one*. Notwithstanding this complication, comparing white attainment and that of *all* the recorded black groups in each LEA is revealing. In nine LEAs (11 per cent of those monitoring for ethnicity in the EMAG submissions) white pupils were less likely to attain five higher grade GCSEs than Black pupils in each of the 'Black' categories listed by the authority. The reverse was the case in 34 LEAs (42 per cent), where none of the Black categories matched the attainment of white pupils locally. In this way, the EMAG returns are helpful in revealing a situation more complex than usually supposed, but one still characterised by inequality of outcome:

25 In judging highest/lowest performances we excluded cases where only one other ethnic group was listed.

26 As we have noted, there is no precise way of determining the number of pupils involved where LEAs only submitted data in the form of percentages. Additionally, we have to maintain the guarantee of confidentiality to participating LEAs. As a supplementary piece of data, however, we can note the following. Of all authorities where Black Caribbean pupils were highest attaining, the LEA with the largest secondary school population in that category counted around 200 pupils in 1998. For Black African pupils the figure was less than 100 pupils; Black other, around 200; Indian, more than 1,000; Pakistani, around 300; and Bangladeshi, more than 1,000.

Black pupils are capable of high achievement. In one in ten authorities that monitor GCSE results by ethnicity, pupils in all recorded Black groups are more likely to attain the benchmark than their white peers.

However, there is still a picture of marked inequality elsewhere: there are almost four times as many LEAs where the picture is reversed and white pupils outperform each of the Black groups.

The previous OFSTED review of research in this field suggested that ***Indian pupils***, as a group, were the highest performing of the main South Asian categories and stated that they 'are achieving levels of success consistently in excess of their white counterparts in some (but not all) urban areas'.[27] The Youth Cohort Study (a major national survey) has since confirmed this pattern.[28] Nevertheless, the consistency of the pattern in the EMAG data remains striking: in 67 submissions (83 per cent of authorities monitoring by ethnicity), in comparison with their white counterparts, Indian pupils are more likely to attain at least five higher grade GCSEs.

In eight out of ten LEAs that monitor by ethnicity, as a group, Indian pupils attain higher outcomes than their white counterparts.

This is a highly significant pattern. For one thing, the attainment of Indian pupils suggests that having English as an Additional Language is not an impenetrable barrier to achievement. The most comprehensive survey currently available on this matter suggests that a majority of all British Asians speak a non-European language: 88 per cent of Indians, 92 per cent of Pakistanis and 97 per cent of Bangladeshis.[29] In some British Asian communities there has been a decline in the use of community languages between adults and children: 'about a third of Indians, African Asians and Pakistanis normally spoke to younger family members in English ... The Bangladeshis were the only South Asian group not yet to have experienced a linguistic decline'.[30] This 'linguistic decline' is, therefore, not sufficient explanation for the relatively high attainment of Indian pupils, since their Pakistani peers (who evidence a similar trend linguistically) do not fair so well in their GCSEs.

Pakistani pupils have typically been recorded as attaining lower average results at age 16 than their white peers.[31] Once again, the EMAG data suggest that this overall pattern masks considerable variation between different authorities. In 35 LEAs (43 per cent of those monitoring by ethnic origin) Pakistani pupils are more likely to attain at least five higher grade GCSEs than their white peers.

Although at the national level Pakistani youth are less likely to attain five higher grade GCSEs than their white peers, this pattern is reversed in some areas.

In four out of ten LEAs, that monitor by ethnic origin, Pakistani pupils are more likely to attain this benchmark than white pupils locally.

27 Gillborn & Gipps (1996, p. 24).
28 Demack et al (1998 and 2000).
29 Modood et al (1997, table 9.14, p. 309).
30 Modood et al (1997, pp. 310-11).
31 *See, for example, Demack et al* (2000) *and Gillborn & Gipps* (1996).

For many years ***Bangladeshi pupils*** were seen as suffering some of the most pronounced educational disadvantages in the country.[32] As a relatively recently settled group, often with comparatively low levels of English language fluency, in the 1980s Bangladeshi pupils were seen as the lowest attaining of the principal minority ethnic groups.[33] The previous OFSTED review in this field challenged the rigidity of this view by showing that the 1990s had witnessed a dramatic improvement in the relative attainments of Bangladeshi children in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (where around one in four of the country's Bangladeshi children are educated). Here, Bangladeshi pupils were attaining higher average exam scores than their white peers as early as 1991.[34] Data from the Youth Cohort Study (detailed later in this document) also suggest that Bangladeshi attainments have improved substantially in recent years. The EMAG data show that these improvements have not been limited to Tower Hamlets. Indeed, 21 EMAG submissions (26 per cent of those monitoring GCSEs by ethnic origin) showed Bangladeshi pupils as more likely to attain five higher grade passes.

> **Bangladeshi attainments still lag behind white averages nationally but at the local level there are many cases where this pattern is challenged.**

Variability and inequality

Data from the first ever submissions to the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant offer a unique snapshot of differences in performance across a wide range of LEAs. In addition to the detailed findings above, it is worth reflecting on the general messages to be taken from the data.

First, there are clear grounds for optimism. For each of the principal minority groups there is at least one authority where they attain higher than the other groups. This is an important finding, although its wider significance must be qualified by the various limitations of the data (noted above).

> **The EMAG returns demonstrate that no ethnic group is inherently less capable of academic success.**

A second conclusion to be drawn from the EMAG data is that, despite the complex picture of variability that emerges, it is clear that inequality of attainment is a significant and persistent problem for many minority ethnic groups. In a majority of cases white attainment was higher than that achieved by most of the separate 'Black' categories; in four out of ten cases the white group attained higher than every one of the categories used to classify Black pupils locally. Similarly, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils lagged behind their white peers in a majority of the submissions.

> **Despite the variation between different LEAs, significant and consistent inequalities of attainment emerge for many of the principal minority groups.**

To this point in our analysis we have been able to use the EMAG data to provide a snapshot of variations in attainment between different ethnic groups in a range of local authorities. Unfortunately, for all its local detail, the EMAG does not gather systematic data on differences between pupils based on gender or social class background. Neither can one year's returns illuminate changes in patterns of attainment over time. For these reasons, in the following sections we turn to survey research as our main source of data.

32 *For a detailed review of this literature see Hoque (2000).*
33 *See, for example, Swann (1985, p. 87) and Taylor with Hegarty (1985).*
34 *Gillborn & Gipps (1996, pp. 25-6).*

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RAISING STANDARDS FOR ALL?

Rising Standards

The 1990s saw a dramatic improvement in the proportion of pupils completing their compulsory schooling with five or more GCSE higher grade (A*-C) passes or their equivalent. As **Figure 1** illustrates, the proportion attaining this key benchmark rose by almost half as much again in the decade up to 1999. The national statistics, however, are not broken down by ethnic origin. The DfEE currently collects national data on attainment in relation to gender but not ethnicity. In the absence of comprehensive national data, the best available estimate is provided by the Youth Cohort Study of England and Wales, a long-established research project funded by the DfEE.[35]

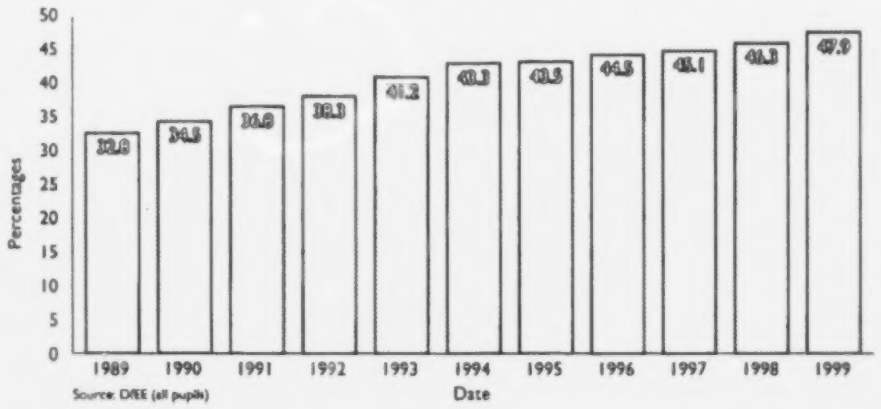

Figure 1: GCSE attainment, England 1989-1999
(five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

Figure 2 presents information from the YCS on the proportion of pupils in each ethnic group who attained five higher grade GCSEs or their equivalent. The table includes data on 1988 (when the GCSE was introduced) and for the two most recent YCS samples (who sat their examinations in the summer of 1995 and 1997 respectively). A striking finding is that members of each principal ethnic group are now more likely to attain five higher grades than ever before. This is an important achievement which demonstrates that levels of attainment can be improved for every ethnic group.

> Each of the main ethnic groups now achieve higher attainments than ever before.

The data in figure 2 also reveal that there are considerable differences in attainment between different ethnic groups: this suggests that pupils of different ethnic origins do not experience equal educational opportunities.[36]

> African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are markedly less likely to attain five higher grade GCSEs than their White and Indian peers nationally.

35 The YCS uses large nationally representative samples to question a range of 16-19-year-olds. It has the advantage of allowing researchers to examine in detail the different attainments, experiences and viewpoints of young men and women from a variety of ethnic and social class backgrounds. Here our analysis is concerned with the state education system and so, to avoid unrepresentative comparisons, most of our calculations exclude respondents who attended independent schools.

36 This pattern of inequality is broadly the same as that described earlier by Gillborn & Gipps (1996, pp. 23-8).

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Although these inequalities are not new they are not inevitable. The YCS points to the variability of attainment; the fact that significant changes have already occurred suggests that further changes are possible in the future.

Figure 2: Changes in GCSE attainment by ethnicity, England & Wales 1988, 1995 & 1997 compared (State schools only)

Ethnic Group	Five or more higher grade passes 1988	1995	1997	Improvement (+/-) '95-'97	'88-'97	Attainment inequality relative to white performance
White	26%	42%	44%	+2	+18	
Black	17%	21%	28%	+7	+11	Gap narrowed in latest figures (from 21 to 16 points) but grew overall (from 9 to 16 points).
Indian	23%	44%	49%	+5	+26	Inequality eliminated by 1995 and white level exceeded by 5 points in latest figures.
Pakistani	20%	22%	28%	+6	+8	Gap narrowed in latest figures (from 20 to 16 points) but grew overall (from 6 to 16 points).
Bangladeshi	13%	23%	32%	+9	+19	Gap narrowed in latest figures (from 19 to 12 points) and fell narrowly overall (from 13 to 12 points).

Source: Youth Cohort Study (Demack et al (2000) & DfEE)
Note: Improvement and gap relative to white attainment is measured in percentage points between the relevant cohorts.

Unequal shares

To ascertain the extent to which all pupils have shared in rising standards relative to each other, it is important to map the broad pattern of educational attainment over time between groups. As mentioned before, the best available data is provided by the YCS. Because the YCS reports on a *sample* of pupils it does not offer a perfect picture of achievement within different groups. The samples are large, and constructed to mirror the wider population in important respects, but when they are divided into numerous different sub-groups the total number of pupils in any one category can fall rapidly.[37] This means that apparently significant fluctuations from one year's sample to another might reflect a change among a relatively small number of pupils. We should be cautious, therefore, about interpreting the results from any single year in isolation. With these reservations in mind, it is nevertheless possible to use past cohorts of the YCS to chart broad changes in attainment over time.

The most recent survey (relating to GCSEs taken in 1997) is the only sample to date where each of the minority ethnic groups has experienced an improvement that is *greater* than that of the white cohort. Consequently, the latest figures show a fall in the relative inequalities in attainment between white pupils and their African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi peers (Figure 2). This evidence of a 'closing gap' is encouraging.

> The most recent survey shows a fall in the relative inequalities of attainment for minority ethnic groups.

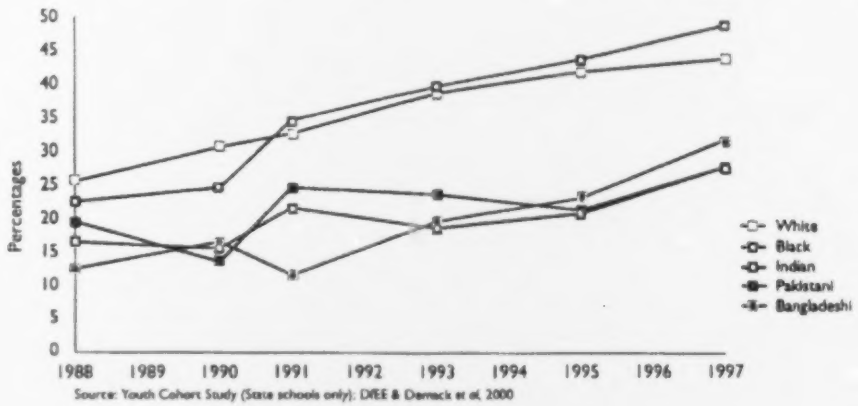
Taking a longer-term view of the same data, however, paints a somewhat different picture. Figure 3 shows the performance of the principal ethnic groups since the introduction of the GCSE. Only two groups (White and Indian pupils) have enjoyed a year-on-year improvement in the proportion attaining the five A*-C benchmark. The attainments of African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people were much less certain, with periods where the proportion attaining five higher grades actually fell back to a lower level than the previous cohort, increasing the gap.

37 Each YCS sample (or 'cohort') is relatively large, but the numbers in any separate category can be substantially smaller. In the latest group, for example, more than 14,000 16-year-olds were included, but only around 120 Bangladeshi young people took part (DfEE, 1999b: table 1).

13

White and Indian pupils are the only groups to have improving rates of attainment in each successive survey.

The data suggest, therefore, that not all ethnic groups have shared equally in the overall improvements in attainment at the five A*-C benchmark level. The patterns are complex but some important issues can be discerned.



Source: Youth Cohort Study (State schools only); DfEE & Derrack et al, 2000

Figure 3: GCSE attainment by ethnic origin, England & Wales 1988-1997
(five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

In the decade between 1988 and 1997 the greatest improvement in performance was achieved by Indian pupils, who moved from 23 per cent to 49 per cent (an increase of 26 percentage points).[38] This improvement was enough to eliminate the gap between themselves and white pupils. Bangladeshi pupils improved by 19 points over the same period, almost identical to the white rate (+18 points). This is an important achievement but means that the 'gap' between Bangladeshi and white pupils has remained almost static during a ten-year period.

Indian pupils have made the greatest gains in the last decade: enough to overtake their white peers as a group.

Bangladeshi pupils have improved significantly but the gap between themselves and white youngsters is much the same.

The development of most concern during this period is the growing gap between white pupils and their peers of Black and Pakistani ethnic origins. The improvement in the attainments of Black pupils (+11 points) and Pakistani pupils (+8) was not enough to keep pace with their white peers. In essence, African-Caribbean and Pakistani pupils did not enjoy an equal share of the overall improvements recorded in the headline statistics.

African-Caribbean and Pakistani pupils have drawn least benefit from the rising levels of attainment: the gap between them and their white peers is bigger now than a decade ago.

38 If we were to calculate the improvement as a percentage of the earlier level then Bangladeshi pupils would appear to have improved the most: their 1997 level is 146 per cent of the 1988 level. However, such calculations can be misleading because they are skewed by the very low starting point (of just 13 per cent) and lose sight of the significant gap that remains between their attainment and that of most other groups.

It is possible to highlight broad relationships in the YCS data by calculating *trendlines* for each ethnic group. Both **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, therefore, are based on the same data: using regression analysis it is possible to fit a trendline which effectively smoothes out the fluctuations between the individual survey cohorts. In this way, **Figure 4** highlights the general trends in attainment over the relevant period. The growing inequality of attainment for African-Caribbean and Pakistani pupils is evident. Similarly, despite the significant improvement in the proportion of Bangladeshi pupils attaining five higher grades, the continuing gap between their trendline and that of white pupils is striking.

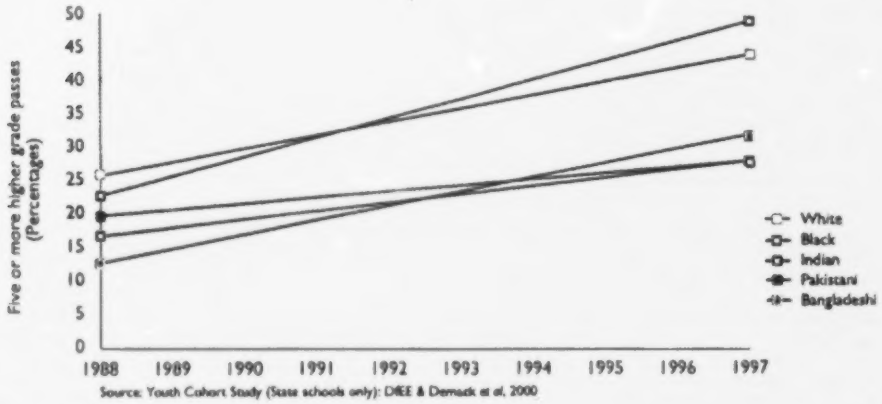


Figure 4: Trendlines – GSCE attainment by ethnic origin, England & Wales 1988-1997 (state schools only)

Mapping attainment from Baseline to GCSE

The question that some school effectiveness researchers have begun to consider, in their attempts to chart the levels of progress made by different groups of pupils, is whether all groups draw equal benefit *throughout* their time in school. To date, no definitive trends have been established by school effectiveness research in this field; indeed, it has been argued that research on school effectiveness and improvement often fails to consider ethnic factors at all.[39] New light is shed on this question by some of the data included in LEA's submissions for support as part of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). As we have noted above, this data has allowed us to analyse a wealth of statistics concerning ethnicity and educational attainment at the local level. In addition to the GCSE data, some of the bids contain material in excess of that formally requested by the DfEE. Where this data includes baseline assessments (made when pupils join the school system at age five) there is the possibility of building a more detailed and complete picture of the changing patterns of attainment as children move through compulsory schooling.[40]

Unfortunately, most EMAG submissions made no mention of data gathered through baseline assessments. There was no formal request for baseline data in the guidance to LEAs and, out of more than 100 submissions we have analysed, only nine make explicit reference to baseline material. This is a potentially vital area where much more rigorous analysis is necessary; by failing to collect baseline data by ethnicity, the DfEE and individual LEAs may be seeing only half the picture. The DfEE requested data on Key Stage 2 (KS2) differences and there was evidence of a relative decline between KS2 and KS4.

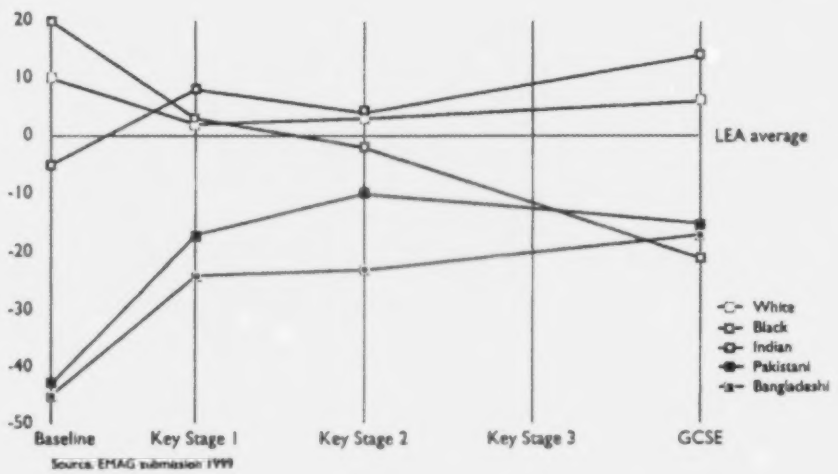
39 This literature was discussed in detail in the previous review (Gillborn & Gipps 1996). The general conclusions in that review still stand: although there has been continuing controversy, about the extent to which such research has addressed 'race' and other equity issues, there are no more concrete indications than previously discussed. See *Hatcher & Thomas* (2000); *Morley & Rassool* (1999); *Mortimore* (1998); *Mortimore & Whitty* (1998); *Sammons* (1999).

40 A range of different baseline assessments are used nationally and there is currently no requirement for schools to monitor results by ethnic origin.

If baseline assessments were routinely monitored by ethnicity the LEAs would be in a stronger position to judge if and when inequalities worsen.

Six LEAs provided enough detail for us to compare African-Caribbean pupils' relative position in baseline and GCSE assessments: in each case the Black pupils' position relative to their white peers worsened (often significantly) between the start and end of their compulsory schooling.[41] In one large urban authority African-Caribbean pupils enter compulsory schooling as the highest achieving group but leave as the group least likely to attain five high grade GCSEs. **Figure 5** shows the situation in this LEA. The data are important for several reasons. First, the LEA serves one of the biggest minority populations in Britain, and so the figures are based on a comparatively large number of pupils. Second, the LEA is rare in the detail with which it monitors attainment by ethnic origin across the different stages of compulsory schooling. As a result the authority has been alerted to a pattern of attainment that raises very serious questions about how minority ethnic groups draw different benefits from their schooling.[42]

Figure 5: Inequalities from Baseline to GCSE by ethnic origin in relation to LEA average (one LEA in 1998)



The data in **figure 5** show a decline in the relative attainment of African-Caribbean pupils at each of the relevant key stages. At the start of their compulsory schooling, Black pupils are the highest attaining of the main ethnic groups in the LEA; recording a level of success 20 percentage points *above* the average for the authority. At Key Stage 2 pupils in the same group are attaining *below* the LEA average and in their GCSE examinations they attain 21 points below the average. Information such as this raises important issues. That any ethnic group could enter school 20 points in advance of the average but leave 21 points behind opens up an important area for educational debate on ethnic minority attainment.

41 Where separate data were not provided for white pupils we compared minority performance against the average for the LEA as a whole.

42 Here we cite only the most recent data from the LEA in question; the overall pattern, however, has already been identified by the authority's statisticians in previous years.

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In a similar analysis of ethnic minority attainments, researchers for *Race on the Agenda* (ROTA), examined the performance of pupils in 13 LEAs located in, or near, London.[43] In one of the first published analyses of EMAG data, their analysis drew particular attention to what could be interpreted as a relative decline in the performance of African-Caribbean pupils between tests at age 11 and 16. Their calculations compared the national average against, first, the proportion of Black pupils attaining level 4 in their Key Stage 2 English tests, and, second, the proportion attaining at least five higher grade GCSEs. In each of the boroughs that produced relevant data (ten in all) the difference between the African-Caribbean average and the national average worsened between KS2 and KS4.[44] Ten LEAs is a relatively small sample and, as the *ROTA* authors acknowledge, the comparison is fairly crude. Nevertheless, the data are worth considering because of the important message they might convey. That is, that the differences in attainment at GCSE (noted above) may represent the end of a longer process of a decline in the relative attainments of Black pupils in the compulsory school system.

Available evidence suggests that the inequalities of attainment for African-Caribbean pupils become progressively greater as they move through the school system; such differences become more pronounced between the end of primary school and the end of secondary education.

One theory that has been offered to account for this situation is that Black pupils are more likely to become alienated from school.[45] Research evidence, however, challenges such stereotypes about alienation, disenchantment, and lack of motivation. In comparison with white peers of the same sex and social class background, for example, studies show that Black pupils tend to display higher levels of motivation and commitment to education. This has been documented in relation to pupils' enthusiasm for school,[46] rates of attendance[47] and support for homework.[48] It is also clearly indicated in the relatively greater encouragement to pursue further education that African-Caribbean pupils receive from their families and in the young people's decisions to pursue such study, often despite negative experiences in the compulsory system.[49] A good deal of qualitative research, for example, argues that Black pupils are often treated more harshly (in disciplinary terms) and viewed with lower teacher expectations on the basis of teachers' assumptions about their motivation and ability.[50] Research evidence also suggests that more attention should focus on the processes by which schools identify 'ability' and plan to ensure that pupils from different ethnic and social class backgrounds make the most of their potential.[51]

Qualitative research (in primary and secondary schools) has consistently highlighted ways in which Black pupils are stereotyped and face additional barriers to academic success.

43 Richardson and Wood (1999).
44 See *Richardson & Wood* (1999, pp. 8-13).
45 See, *for example, Foster* (1992).
46 Smith & Tomlinson (1989, pp. 90-91).
47 Smith & Tomlinson (1989, p. 106). See also Sewell (1997).
48 Eggleston *et al* (1986, pp. 74-9).
49 Drew (1995, pp. 92-104).
50 The bulk of this research was reviewed previously in Gillborn & Gipps (1996, 54-7). Recent notable additions to the literature include a study of racism in primary education (Connolly, 1998), an ethnographic study focusing particularly on South Asian children's lives at home and in school (Bhatti, 1999), and a detailed analysis of selection and the institutionalisation of inequality in two multi-ethnic secondary schools (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000).
51 In the first study of how ethnic origin is related to teachers' use of 'tiered' GCSE examinations, for example, Gillborn & Youdell revealed that Black pupils were significantly less likely to be placed in the higher tier but more likely to be entered in the lowest tier. The situation was most pronounced in mathematics: here a *majority* of Black pupils were entered in the Foundation Tier, where a higher grade pass (of C or above) is not available to candidates regardless of how well they perform in the exam.

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SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Measuring social class

There is a strong direct association between social class background and success in education: put simply, the higher a child's social class, the greater are their attainments on average.[52] According to DfEE figures, in 1997 children from the most advantaged backgrounds (classified as 'managerial/professional' in the YCS) were more than three times as likely to attain five or more higher grade GCSEs than their peers at the other end of the class spectrum (in the 'unskilled manual' group).[53] This is one of the longest-established trends in British education but the association is not static. Indeed, there is evidence that the inequality of attainment between social classes has *grown* since the late 1980s. For example, in relation to the five higher grade benchmark, between 1988 and 1997, the gap between children from 'managerial/professional' backgrounds and 'unskilled manual' groups grew from 40 to 49 percentage points.[54]

> **Since the late 1980s the attainment gap between the highest and lowest social classes has widened.**

Social class background is both difficult and costly to categorise. There is, for example, no single scale that enjoys universal support. Although almost all measures include information about parents' employment status, there are differences in how occupations are categorised and disputes about additional factors that are sometimes included (such as parental education).[55] Another problem is that gathering reliable data from pupils can be difficult. This information must then be translated into a form that can be manipulated statistically and, unlike most items on questionnaires, social class codings cannot be routinely computerised in any simple automated way.[56]

> **Difficulty with definitions, and the cost of analysing suitable material, means that little research gathers adequate data on social class background.**

Many academic writers draw a simple distinction between 'manual' and 'non-manual' backgrounds (where the former is taken as roughly equivalent to 'working class' and the latter 'middle class'). A good deal of work in education uses whether or not a child is eligible for free school meals (FSM) as an indicator of social disadvantage. This is a convenient measure because the necessary raw data are routinely available within the education system. However, receipt of FSM is really an indicator of family poverty not a measure of social class in the sense that the term is usually understood.[57]

Before examining new data on the interaction of 'race' and social class, it is important to acknowledge that statistics which reveal an *association* between certain factors do not necessarily indicate a direct *causal* relationship. It might be assumed, for example, that because working class pupils have historically lagged behind their more economically advantaged peers then the explanation must lie within working class pupils themselves, their families and/or communities. Clearly there are many ways in which children from relatively prosperous backgrounds are advantaged. However, it

52 It is important to remember, of course, that the relationship is far from universal. Although average differences between social classes are clear, there also remains a wide range of achievement *within* each group.

53 DfEE (1999b: 9).

54 In 1988, five or more higher grade GCSEs were attained by 52 per cent of children from 'managerial/professional' backgrounds and 12 per cent of peers from 'unskilled manual' homes; in 1997, the proportions were 69 per cent and 20 per cent respectively (DfEE 1999b: 9).

55 *For more detail on relevant disputes see Bonney (1998), Compton (1998), and Marshall (1997).*

56 We are grateful to Professor John Gray (of Homerton College, Cambridge) for bringing this issue to our attention.

57 Not all working class households qualify for state benefits and so the proportion of FSM pupils in a school is not a good indicator of its overall class composition. Additionally, some studies measure FSM take-up (rather than eligibility); such an approach can be misleading where there are cultural differences in the willingness of some communities to take advantage of state benefits. *For details on differences between ethnic groups in household income, receipt of benefit and other relevant factors, see Berthoud (1998) and ONS (1996).*

should not be assumed that all (or most) of the reason for differences in attainment lie *outside* the school. Research in both the United States and Britain overwhelmingly concludes that Black pupils and their working class white peers are likely to be over-represented in lower-ranked teaching groups, for example, where schools adopt 'setting by ability' or other forms of selective grouping.[58] Their disproportionate concentration can be mapped by tracing the process of selection inside schools. Research has documented how these processes are significantly influenced by differential teacher expectations, which tend to be markedly lower for these groups of pupils (*see above*). The pupils' subsequent placement in lower ranked teaching groups, in both primary and secondary schools, institutionalises these differences and can create additional barriers to achievement. Even in schools that do not embrace setting, some form of selection is increasingly common.[59] The structure of the GCSE examination itself now requires most subject areas to enter pupils for one of two different 'tiers' of exam, where the highest grades are only available to pupils in the top tier.[60]

The ways in which social class affects educational opportunities are multiple and complex: some factors lie outside the school, others operate through institutional process that disadvantage particular groups of pupils.

Class, 'race' and attainment inequalities

The previous OFSTED review of research in this area indicated that differences in attainment between certain ethnic groups remained significant even when taking social class into account.[61] The authors warned, however, that the available data were old and the ethnic categories relatively crude. We now have access to more sophisticated and up-to-date material. In general, however, the same trends are still apparent.

Figure 6 shows the proportion of pupils attaining five or more higher grade GCSEs, distinguished by social class and ethnic origin, between 1988 and 1997.[62] This is the first time that it has been possible to trace differences in attainment by class *and* ethnicity for such a long time period and many important issues are highlighted. When interpreting the data, however, we must remember the caution urged previously: although the YCS uses a large and nationally representative sample, some of the sub-samples can become quite small whenever researchers try simultaneously to analyse several factors. In **Figure 6**, for example, cases have been excluded where the sample was less than 30 pupils. Consequently, the combined Pakistani/Bangladeshi category (which has already been created because of small sample sizes) does not appear for non-manual pupils in three of the six cohorts.

One of the most striking findings is that generally pupils from non-manual backgrounds have significantly higher attainments, as a group, than their peers of the same ethnic origin but from manual households.

The familiar association between class and attainment can be seen to operate within each of the main ethnic groups.

This confirms the strong association between class and educational achievement. However, in the case of African-Caribbean pupils the social class difference is much less pronounced; indeed, the pattern is actually reversed in one of the cohorts.[63]

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58 See *CRE* (1992); *Gillborn & Youdell* (2000); *Hallam & Toutounji* (1996); *Oakes* (1990); *Slavin* (1996); *and Sukhnandan & Lee* (1998).

59 See *Hallam* (1999).

60 Unlike other subjects, maths operates a three-tier system: here pupils in the bottom tier cannot attain a higher grade GCSE (at grade C or above) no matter how well they perform in the written exam (Gillborn and Youdell, 2000)

61 Gillborn & Gipps (1996, p. 16-18).

62 We are grateful to the DfEE and to Sean Demack, David Drew and Mike Grimsley (of Sheffield Hallam University) for making available these previously unpublished analyses.

63 In 1990, one per cent more Black pupils from a manual background attained the benchmark.

The data suggest that even when controlling for social class, there remain significant inequalities of attainment between different ethnic groups. For example, only white pupils improved year on year regardless of their class background.[64] During the research period there were points of relative decline in the attainment of African-Caribbean and Pakistani/Bangladeshi pupils from both manual and non-manual backgrounds.

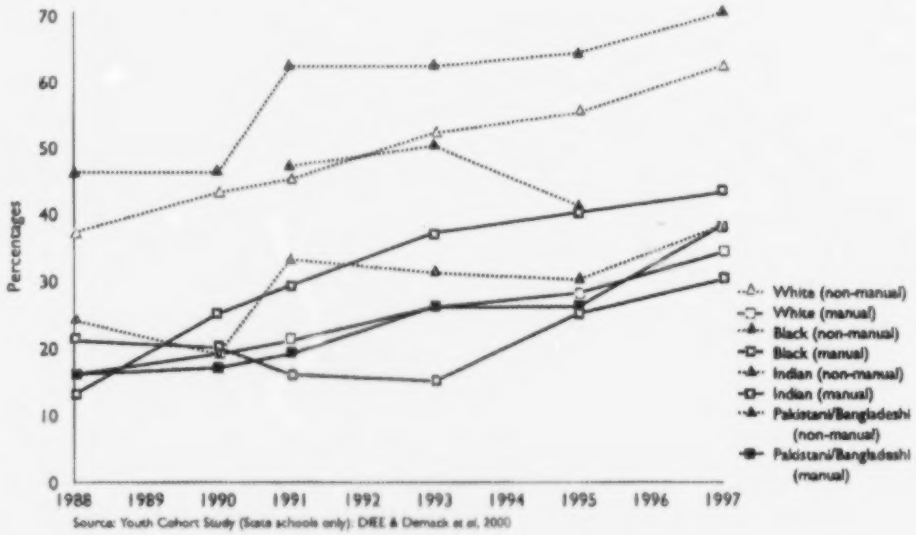

Figure 6: GCSE attainment by social class and ethnic origin, England & Wales 1988-1997 (five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

Comparing like with like in terms of their class background, clear inequalities of attainment are evident for Pakistani/Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean pupils.

For most of the period in question, Black pupils were less likely to attain five higher grade passes than peers of the same social class in any other ethnic group. This has not always been the case: at the beginning of the research period, in 1988, Black pupils were the *most* successful of the groups from manual backgrounds. The relative decline of working class Black pupils has, therefore, been marked. The gap is also particularly striking between African-Caribbean pupils from non-manual backgrounds and peers of the same social class in different ethnic groups. Indeed, in the most recent data, Indian and Pakistani/Bangladeshi pupils from *manual* backgrounds were at least as successful as Black pupils from non-manual homes (with white manual pupils only four percentage points behind).

Inequalities of attainment are now evident for Black pupils regardless of their class background.

African-Caribbean pupils from manual backgrounds fell behind other working class peers in levels of attainment during the late 1980s and 1990s.

64 Indian pupils from non-manual backgrounds who were sampled in 1990 and 1993 achieved the same rate of success as the previous cohort.

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African-Caribbean pupils from non-manual homes are the lowest attaining of the middle class groups. In some cases they are barely matching the attainments of working class pupils in other ethnic groups.

These new data clearly establish that ethnic inequalities persist even when class differences are taken into account.

Two clear patterns emerge when considering the interaction of ethnic origin and social class. First, the familiar difference in attainment between pupils from non-manual and manual backgrounds is replicated *within* each ethnic group. Second, social class factors do not override the influence of ethnic inequality: when comparing pupils with similar class backgrounds there are still marked inequalities of attainment between different ethnic groups. Indeed, in some respects the analysis reveals new inequalities; showing that Black pupils from relatively advantaged backgrounds are little better placed, as a group, than white peers from manual backgrounds. This suggests that while targeting class disadvantage is clearly necessary, in isolation such action may have only a limited effect in closing the gap between particular ethnic groups. As the data demonstrate, new areas of concern are emerging where expected social class differentials are mitigated by the effects of 'race' inequality.

THE 'GENDER GAP'

GENDER DIFFERENCES

In recent years there has been a great deal of discussion about the growing gap between the average attainments of boys and girls in GCSE examinations. Data supplied by the DfEE confirms that the gap is increasing. In 1989, 29.8 per cent of boys and 35.8 per cent of girls attained five or more higher grade GCSE passes, a gap of six percentage points: by 1999, however, the gap had increased to more than ten points, with 42.8 per cent of boys and 53.4 per cent of girls attaining five higher grades.[65] In explaining these changes researchers have pointed to a range of factors, including: new approaches to assessment, teaching and learning; the introduction of comprehensive schooling; and the positive impact of targeted equal opportunities policies.[66] Some have sought to explain boys' lower attainments in relation to changing notions of masculinity and new attitudes to school and work.[67] It should be remembered, however, that the phenomenon of boys' underachievement is not consistent across subject areas. There are considerable differences in entry and attainment patterns between the sexes in some curriculum areas, with the relative gains made at GCSE sometimes being reversed later in A-level attainment.[68] Studies also show girls facing a range of additional barriers in fulfilling their potential.[69]

Despite these complexities, notions of a 'new gender gap' (with boys lagging behind) have captured the popular imagination. In this context it is useful to try to contextualize this aspect of educational disparity. **Figure 7** attempts to set the scale of the gender gap in context by showing differences in attainment between boys and girls alongside examples of ethnic and social class inequalities.[70]

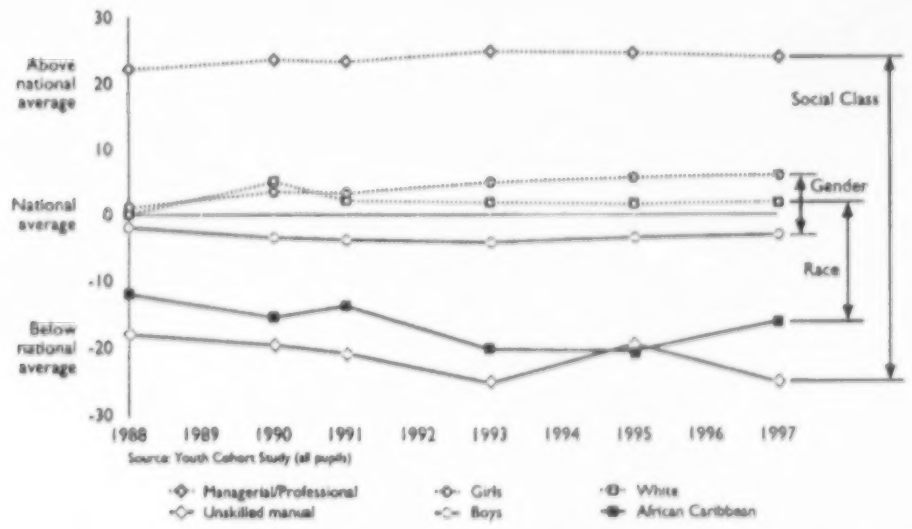

Figure 7: Attainment inequalities by race, class and gender, England & Wales 1988-1997 (five or more higher grade GCSEs relative to the national average)

In this illustration the horizontal axis represents the proportion of pupils nationally who attained five or more higher grade GCSE passes and their equivalent. Hence, in 1997 (the most recent year for which YCS data are available), five or more higher grades were attained nationally by 45 per cent of

65 Data refers to GCSE/GNVQ achievements of pupils aged 15 and over in England (all schools).
66 See, for example, Arnot et al (1998), Dowd & Weiner (1997), Epstein et al (1998a & b), Weiner et al (1997) and Wragg (1997).
67 See, for example, Mac an Ghaill (1994 & 1996) and Steinberg et al (1997).
68 See, for example, Arnot et al (1998) and Murphy & Elwood (1998).
69 For example, girls continue to experience stereotyped advice on their subject option choices (see Gillborn and Youdell 2000) and are sometimes barred from the highest grades because of the tendency for them to be placed in the 'intermediate Tier' in mathematics examinations (Stobart et al 1992).
70 For the sake of continuity all data in Figure 7 are drawn from the same source, i.e. the Youth Cohort Study between 1988 and 1997 (DfEE 1999b, Table B, page 9).

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pupils overall: this included 51 per cent of girls (six percentage points above the national average) and 42 per cent of boys (three points below). Consequently, in the illustration, boys' attainment is positioned three points below the national average, and girls appear six points above the axis. The illustration shows that the gender gap is considerably smaller than those associated with 'race' and class. In the latest figures the Black/white gap is twice the size of the gender gap.[71] In relation to the national average it is clear that Black pupils and their peers from unskilled manual homes experience the greatest disadvantage.

> The gender gap is considerably smaller than the inequalities of attainment associated with ethnic origin and social class background.

Figure 7 is, of course, only a relatively crude comparison: we have already shown, for example, that patterns of attainment vary by social class background *within* ethnic groups (*see above*). Nevertheless, the illustration is helpful because it characterises something of the relative scale of these inequalities. Indeed, this analysis suggests that, of the three best-known dimensions of inequality ('race', class and gender) the latter, gender, and in particular boys' underperformance represents the narrowest disparity. In contrast to the disproportionate media attention, our data shows gender to be a less problematic issue than the significant disadvantage of 'race', and the even greater inequality of class. Our intention here is to contextualize these relative disadvantages: it is important not to fall into the trap of simply arguing *between* various inequalities. *All* pupils have a gender, class and ethnic identity – the factors do not operate in isolation.

'Race' and gender

Qualitative research showing African-Caribbean girls doing relatively well in comparison to their white male and female peers within the locality of their schools has been much cited as evidence of gender-specific strategies to resist racism and overcome disadvantage.[72] This has generally been misinterpreted to mean that it is only Black boys, and not girls, that face inequalities. However, new data from the Youth Cohort Study suggest that while the gender gap is now established within each of the principal minority ethnic groups, there are nevertheless consistent and significant inequalities of attainment *between* ethnic groups *regardless* of pupils' gender.

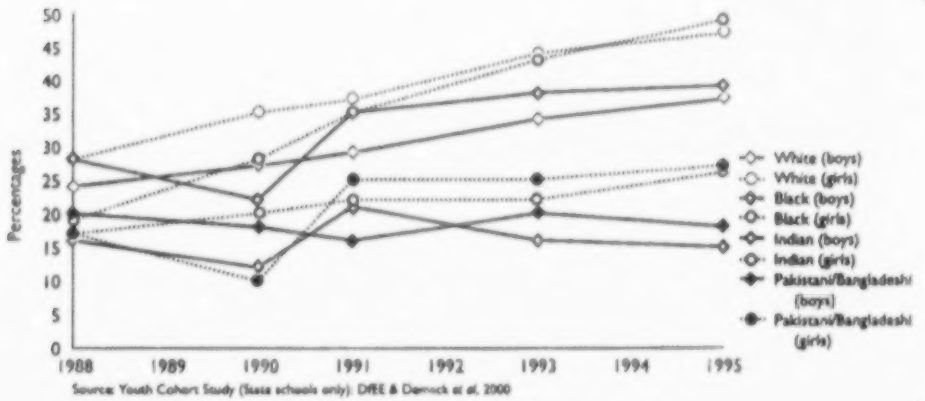


Figure 8: GCSE attainment by gender and ethnic origin, England & Wales 1988-1995 (five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

71 In 1997 the gap between boys and girls attaining five or more higher grade passes was nine percentage points; the Black/white gap was 18 percentage points. The difference between managerial/professional and unskilled manual was 49 percentage points.

72 See Fuller (1980); Mac an Ghaill (1988); Mirza (1992).

Figure 8 presents data on GCSE attainments by ethnic origin and gender, between 1988 and 1995, which indicate that by 1991 girls in the Pakistani/Bangladeshi group had emulated girls in other ethnic groups by overtaking their male peers.[73]

> **In each of the principal ethnic groups nationally, girls are more likely to achieve five higher grade GCSEs than boys of the same ethnic origin.**

By 1995 a pattern was established with a gender gap of similar proportions within each ethnic group (with girls in each group about ten percentage points ahead of boys).[74] As Figure 8 illustrates, however, throughout this period there have also been consistent and significant inequalities of attainment between ethnic groups *regardless* of pupils' gender. Since 1991 white girls and Indian girls have attained five higher grade passes in roughly similar proportions with a considerable gap between them and Pakistani/Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean girls.

> **Ethnic inequalities persist when comparing groups of pupils of the same sex but with different ethnic origins.**

As with findings noted previously in this report (e.g. in relation to unequal shares in the benefits of change) the data highlight a particular disadvantage experienced by Pakistani/Bangladeshi and African-Caribbean pupils. Here the girls attain rather higher than their male peers but the gender gap within their groups is insufficient to close the pronounced inequality of attainment associated with their ethnic group as a whole.

> **The inequalities of attainment of Bangladeshi/Pakistani and African-Caribbean girls not only mean that they do less well than white and Indian girls, they are also less likely to attain five higher grade GCSEs than white and Indian *boys*.**

These data must be treated with caution. As we have already warned, when controlling for multiple background factors (such as ethnic origin *and* gender) the sample sizes in the YCS begin to shrink dramatically.[75] It is worth noting, however, that several of the LEA applications for funding under the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant include data that support the same general trends. In one especially large metropolitan authority, for example, 28 per cent of African-Caribbean girls attained five or more higher grade GCSEs: a rate of success higher than African-Caribbean boys (13 per cent) but lower than white and Indian pupils *irrespective* of gender. The same pattern is true for Pakistani girls in the LEA (**see Figure 9**).

We have already commented on the range of variation at the local level: nevertheless, data such as this (both from one of the country's biggest LEAs and from a nationally representative survey) suggest that ethnic inequalities of attainment are not confined to any particular gender. Thus we can conclude that when controlling for ethnic origin and gender, the data reveal similar patterns to when it was subjected to controls by social class (above). 'Race' and ethnicity remain key defining factors in both cases.

73 As with the previous analysis for social class and ethnic interactions within the YCS, in order to produce viable sample sizes it was necessary for the researchers to combine the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups.

74 In 1995 the gender gaps were as follows: Pakistani/Bangladeshi pupils, nine points; Indian and White pupils, 10 points; Black pupils, 11 points.

75 Almost half of the values in Figure 8 represent fewer than 30 individual pupils in the original sample.

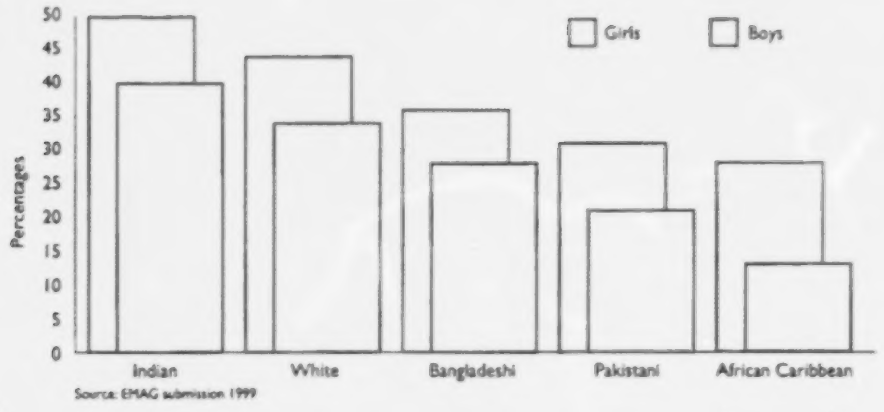
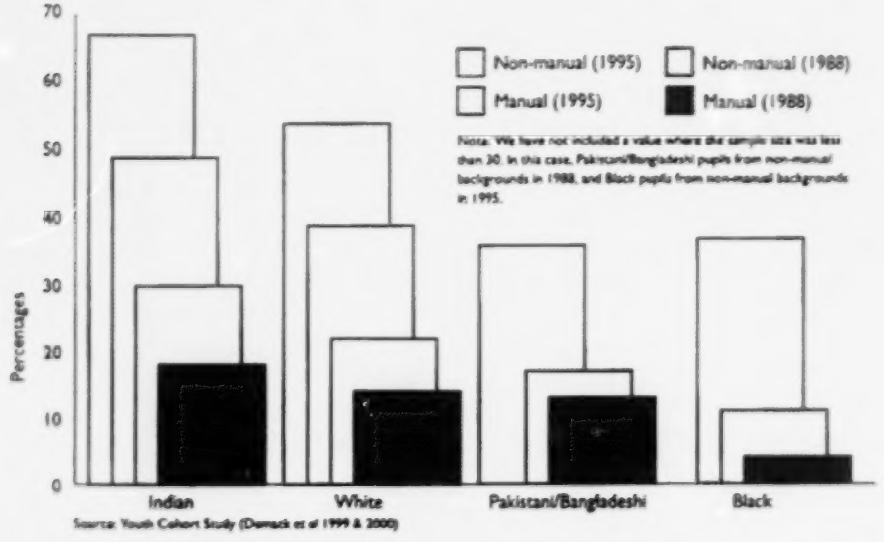


Figure 9: GCSE attainment by gender and ethnic origin for one LEA in 1998 (five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

'Race', class and gender

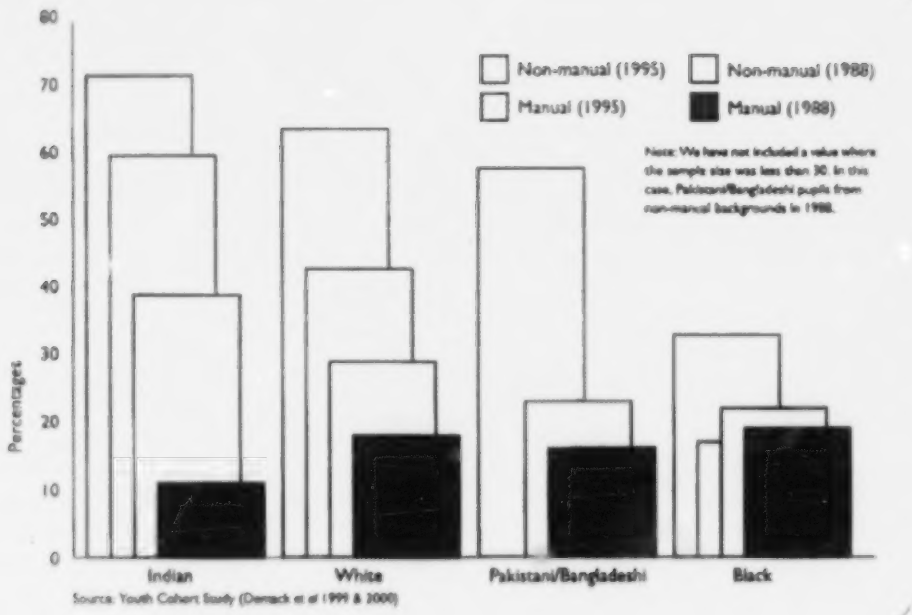
While there are many studies that look at the separate effects of 'race', or class or gender there is a dearth of research that addresses these three variables together. The Youth Cohort Study provides a unique opportunity for us to analyse the three variables of 'race', class and gender simultaneously: we are fortunate here in being able to draw on the most up-to-date analyses of relevant YCS data.

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the proportion of pupils attaining at least five higher grade GCSEs in relation to their gender, social class and ethnic origin.[76] Because of small sample sizes it has again been necessary to combine the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups and to use a two-fold model of social class (comparing non-manual and manual backgrounds). Even so there are still cases where individual values would represent less than 30 pupils and, in these cases, the values have not been shown in the relevant illustration.



Figures 10: GCSE attainment in England & Wales, 1988 and 1995: Boys by social class and ethnic origin (five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

76 Figures 10 and 11 are based on data supplied by Sean Demack and his colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University.



Figures 11: GCSE attainment in England & Wales, 1988 and 1995:
Girls by social class and ethnic origin (five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

As would be predicted on the basis of the findings we have established to this point (*see above*), pupils in each category (comparing like with like in terms of gender, social class ***and*** ethnic origin) were more likely to attain five high grade GCSEs in 1995 than they were in 1988. The significance of this finding should not be overlooked: it means that every group has drawn some benefit from the general improvements in attainment over the last decade or so. However, the emerging pattern of ethnic inequalities (noted in earlier sections of this report) is also present and in both the 1988 and 1995 cohorts. Comparing pupils of the same gender and social class background there are five groups for whom we have a value for each ethnic group in the research: in four of these cases Indian pupils did best, followed by white, Pakistani/Bangladeshi and Black pupils respectively.[77] Bearing in mind the limitations of the data, our conclusions here are tentative. Nevertheless, the available evidence points to the following:

no group has been completely excluded from the improvement in GCSE attainments during the late 1980s and 1990s;

by 1995 the gender gap was present within each ethnic group regardless of social class background;

ethnic inequalities persist even when simultaneously controlling for gender and class;

when comparing like with like, in terms of gender, class and ethnic origin, consistent and significant ethnic inequalities of attainment remain clear.

77 This pattern held true for boys from manual backgrounds in 1988 and 1995, and for girls from manual and non-manual backgrounds in 1995. The only exception occurred for girls from manual backgrounds in 1988.

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CONCLUSION

A number of broad conclusions can be drawn from this review concerning education inequalities in relation to 'race', class and gender:

> ethnic inequalities of attainment vary from one area to another but, despite this variability, distinct patterns of inequality are consistently visible;
>
> inequalities of attainment in GCSE examinations place African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils in a disadvantaged position in the youth education, labour, and training markets, and increase the likelihood of social and economic exclusion in later life;
>
> social class and gender differences are also associated with differences in attainment but neither can account for persistent underlying ethnic inequalities: comparing like with like, African-Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils do not enjoy equal opportunities;
>
> ethnic inequalities are not new but neither are they static. Evidence shows that in some cases the inequalities have increased in recent years. African-Caribbean and Pakistani pupils, for example, have not shared equally in the rising levels of GCSE attainment.

In the context of an inclusive educational agenda that seeks to raise standards for all, this evidence indicates a need for clarity and guidance in translating the commitment to equality and inclusion (so often expressed at the national level) into policy proposals and practice at the local/school level.

Towards an Inclusive Strategy

Since the last OFSTED review of research on the achievements of minority ethnic pupils, several studies have added to the attempt to identify school- and LEA-based strategies for raising minority attainment.[78] Certain factors repeatedly emerge as significant, including:

- strong leadership on equal opportunities and social justice (from the LEA and the headteacher in particular);
- seeking and using pupil and parent perspectives;
- designing and enacting clear procedures for recording and acting on racist incidents;
- generating and sustaining an ethos that is open and vigilant, which enables pupils to discuss 'race' issues and share concerns;
- developing and communicating high expectations accompanied by a clear view that under-performance by any group is unacceptable;
- reviewing curricular and pastoral approaches to ensure their sensitivity and appropriateness;
- using ethnic monitoring as a routine and rigorous part of the school's/LEA's self evaluation and management.

Schools and LEAs require support and encouragement in their attempts to develop and sustain good practice in this area. It is evident from our analysis of the EMAG submissions that there is no clear consensus about how the inclusion agenda, prominent in some official policy statements, should

78 The research that generated these insights has been funded and conducted by a range of participants, including academic researchers, charitable foundations and statutory bodies such as OFSTED, the DfEE and the Commission for Racial Equality. Useful publications include Blair et al (1998), Gillborn (1995), Osler (1997), OFSTED (1999), Siraj-Blatchford (1994) and Weekes & Wright (1999).

be translated into real change at the school and LEA level. As part of their submission for EMAG support, LEAs were asked to set out their targets for minority attainment in the coming years. Figure 12 details some examples of the different kinds of target that were set.

Figure 12: Inclusion & Exclusion: Race equality and LEA target setting (five or more higher grade GCSEs)

LEA	Ethnic group	Actual Performance (1998)	Target set for 2002	Projected improvement (percentage) (points)	Position relative to white group 1998	2002
LEA #1 (an inclusive strategy)						
	White	47%	53%	+6	N/A	N/A
	Bl. Caribbean	20%	45%	+25	-27	-8
	Bl. African	31.3%	50%	+18.7	-15.7	-3
	Bl. Other	33.3%	50%	+16.7	-13.7	-3
	Indian	42.9%	53%	+10.1	-4.1	0
	Pakistani	38.5%	50%	+11.5	-8.5	-3
	Bangladeshi	25%	45%	+20	-22	-8
LEA #2 (inequalities remain static)						
	White	48%	57%	+9	N/A	N/A
	Bl. Caribbean	25%	34%	+9	-23	-23
	Bl. African	66%	75%	+9	+18	+18
	Bl. Other	33%	42%	+9	-15	-15
	Indian	62%	71%	+9	+14	+14
	Bangladeshi	45%	54%	+9	-3	-3
LEA #3 (Whites advantaged and African-Caribbeans targeted for greater inequality)						
	White	28.4%	40%	+11.6	N/A	N/A
	Af-Caribbean	8.3%	17%	+8.7	-20.1	-23
	Indian	33.1%	43%	+9.9	+4.7	+3
	Pakistani	19.4%	30%	+10.6	-9	-10
	Bangladeshi	14.1%	27%	+12.9	-14.3	-13
LEA #4 (Whites targeted for greater inequality)						
	White	40%	49%	+9	N/A	N/A
	Bl. Caribbean	29%	57%	+28	-11	+8
	Bl. African	28%	57%	+29	-12	+8
	Bl. Other	43%	52%	+9	+3	+3
	Indian	60%	68%	+8	+20	+19
	Pakistani	69%	81%	+12	+29	+32
	Bangladeshi	26%	62%	+36	-14	+13

Source: 1999 EMAG submissions.
Note: LEA #2 did not list any details for Pakistani pupils. LEA #3 used a single combined group for Black pupils.

LEA #1, in Figure 12, is an example of an authority that has set what might be termed *'inclusive' targets*: the lower a group currently attains, the higher is its improvement target. Consequently, by 2002, if the targets are realized, the inequalities of attainment between white pupils and each of the minority ethnic groups will have been reduced. This is in line with the dominant approach to equal opportunities issues in previous work on 'underachievement'; in much equal opportunity legislation; and in our analyses of attainment inequalities (above).[79]

79 See, for example, Rampton (1981) and Swann (1985).

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LEA #2, however, simply sets a *common improvement target* regardless of each group's current position: by 2002 all ethnic groups in the authority are intended to improve by nine percentage points on their current level. It could be argued that this is a 'fair' way of setting a target but such an approach assumes a very limited understanding of social justice. By setting a common target for future improvement LEA #2 does nothing to address current and past inequalities of attainment. In effect this authority has set itself the target of maintaining inequalities at their current level.

In contrast, LEAs #3 and #4 set targets that would *increase* certain inequalities of attainment. White pupils are currently the second highest attaining group in LEA #3, where only Indian pupils are more likely to attain five or more high grade GCSEs. Nevertheless, the authority has set a relatively high improvement target for white pupils (rising by nearly 12 points): a target that is second only to that for Bangladeshis (currently the second lowest-attaining group locally). The lowest attaining group of all (African-Caribbean pupils) are set the lowest improvement target. The result of these moves, if delivered in practice, will be that white pupils close the gap between themselves and Indian pupils, but Pakistani and African-Caribbean pupils fall further behind their white peers. If white pupils appear privileged by planning in LEA #3, however, the reverse seems to be the case in LEA #4. Here the authority has set targets that would take all minority groups to a higher level of attainment than the white group by 2002. It is difficult to discern what kind of vision informs target setting in these LEAs, suffice it to say that, in both cases, the authorities seem to be planning for greater ethnic inequality in the future.

> **The current situation evidences a variety of approaches to 'race' and attainment at the LEA level: some authorities set inclusive targets (that reduce inequalities of attainment) but others are setting targets that would involve greater inequalities in the future.**

In keeping with existing approaches to inclusion and equal opportunities in education, and in view of new legislation which places a positive duty on the public sector, including schools, to promote racial equality,[80] the development of more inclusive strategies presents a clear way forward.[81]

80 *Hansard*, 27 January 2000, column 247W.

81 An example of an inclusive policy strategy would be to require that all policies likely to have a direct or indirect effect on education are evaluated in terms of their impact on inequalities of attainment between ethnic groups. It might be formulated in such a way that by favouring the lowest attaining groups action will, wherever possible, reduce such inequalities. This approach to inclusion builds on previous experience and echoes the first recommendation of the Acheson inquiry into health inequalities (Acheson, 1998, p. 30).

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